

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

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LB 199

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CLERK: Mr. President, 199, a bill by Senator Wickersham. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 11, referred to the Health Committee, advanced to General File. There are committee amendments, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MAURSTAD: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. To open on LB 199, Senator Wickersham.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. President, members of the body. Just so we get our proper orientation here, this is not a bill that concerns accountability and disclosure, there are no criminal aspects to it, and I believe that it's a bill that has substantial merit. What this bill concerns is hospitals, and specific kinds of hospitals, specifically hospitals in rural areas with 50...with fewer than 50 beds. And what it does is make those hospitals eligible for a grant fund that we created, a year ago, in the Nebraska Health Care Trust Fund Act. The purpose of that was to convert nursing home beds to assisted living beds, providing a different care level that is more and more appropriate in our communities. This bill extends that same opportunity to those small rural hospitals. And, of course, it is the hospitals and the nursing homes in those small communities that are the most severely challenged in terms of resources and, quite frankly, the ability of their residents to pay. And so this bill creates additional flexibility for those small rural hospitals. It would allow them to apply for grants to convert some of their swing beds to assisted living. I believe that's an appropriate mix. You'd have a mix of care levels available in the hospitals, if that was allowed to happen. Now there is a committee amendment that Senator Jensen can describe, I'm sure, much better than I can. But if you're hearing...if your concern immediately is whether nursing homes are going to have a problem with this bill, I think I can assure you that they will not, especially if you adopt the committee amendment. And I'll leave that to Senator Jensen to explain in detail. But certainly, if the committee amendment is adopted, it's my understanding that there is no difficulty with this bill from the nursing home industry. With that, Mr. President, I believe we should proceed to the committee amendment.